TOWN
&
OUNTRY
HURCH

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No. 60
March, 1950

Take Off the City Blinders

MARGARET BLAIR JOHNSTONE

• Five years ago, your articles on the rural church were usually placed on the "to be read some time" pile. This, I assure you, was no reflection upon the excellence of your writing. It was the direct result of my experience as pastor for ten years of an apartment house, residential area city church. I entered upon that pastorate with a scholastic training so thoroughly urban as to include settlement house experience. This, in turn, was superimposed upon a childhood so devoid of things rural that it never even included the planting of an onion. Such a background, you will agree, is not conducive to making anything on the rural theme "must" reading. That was five years ago. The location? Chicago.

Today I am writing, as you know, from a hamlet so tiny, so far removed from so-called civilization that when the Chicago moving company representative called to give an estimate on moving expense, he said (and his awesome pronouncement rendered reverence), "What a hide-out! God himself won't find you there!"

On To Wadhams

"Wadhams - Whallonsburg - Essex-Willsboro—sounds like the tail end of a one-track line!" exclaimed one relative who seriously suggested I see a psychiatrist. He thought me beyond that help when I pointed out that the one-track line came no nearer than Westport-on-Lake-Champlain, three miles distant from Wadhams, New York, the parish point where we were to live.

"You won't last a month up there. You'll go crazy. What will you ever do? Where will you go? You'll be back, just wait!" prophesied well-meaning friends. "You're city-minded, city-born, city-bred. You cannot buck your entire background!"

Well, I have not gone back. So far as I can determine, I am still in my right mind or near enough to it to wonder if perhaps one of the basic elements in the rural problem is not completely overlooked by those most able to solve it.

From time to time you mention, in your articles, the importance of the rural field and the challenge it presents. Yet, how many city ministers read your articles, complacently nod their heads and say, individually, "Here am I, O Lord, send me—TO A BIGGER CITY CHURCH!"

What's In the City?

What is it ministers seek in the city? Why do men in their ministerial prime consider the rural church as a possibility only as a field for their fledgling effort or as a comfortable pasture land after their real contribution has been given to city work? How many ministers (like my small son who, the first time he saw ice cream, said "don't like dat" before he even tasted it) are condemning sight unseen that which, attempted, might redeem for them the calling which they, unconsciously, have let drop into the rut of a mere occupation?

Beyond this, what budget of satisfactions does the city church offer that the rural church, given the equivalent in leadership, cannot meet? I say: "None!"

After ten years' experience in an exceedingly happy city pastorate, and now contemplating my fifth year in the rural field, I feel that perhaps my word might lend added meaning to your plea for a better chance and consideration on the part of *all* ministers for work in the rural field.

What do ministers seek in city churches?

Are We Fond of Numbers?

For one thing, city ministers are fond of numbers. The more pews filled, the less empty places, the happier the minister.

Why, then, do ministers think this joy is confined to city churches alone? In thinking this problem through, I turned to a Yearbook. Do

you know that in the 365 churches in our Conference (New York Congregational) there are only 33 congregations which, on the average, number a larger attendance than did our combined four rural congregations last Sunday? This may surprise you for, as you know, last Sunday marked no special occasion.

To go further into the statistical realm: though no point in the parish numbers more than 1800 in population, the combined membership of our parish of four churches ranks in the top one-fifth list of the Conference and the total budget figures rank right along in the same category as the membership figures.

On Potential Influence

Another inclination of the city minister is that of finding subtle satisfaction in the knowledge which comes from the realization of his potential influence. One sign of "having arrived" is the growth, for instance, of the Christian education program in his church to the place where he must have a director of Christian education. Well, we have a director of Christian education—besides the two co-pastors.

Another problem of the rural field is the fact that trained directors, as well as ministers, flock to the city churches. I submit to you the fact, however, that in our Conference there are only 19 churches who need such workers as much as we do here in Essex. Between the Sunday School, the Weekday Church School, the Vacation Church School and after-school activities we reach an average of over 300 children of grade school age alone every week.

And Youth Work

This is to say nothing of the youth work. "The future of the Church—the great hope of the world—Christian youth!" How we prattle on about it! To stay young in mind, heart, spirit—is this not another desire of the city minister? To keep abreast, to not lose touch with life, to grapple with real issues—is this possible only for city-dwellers; is it a special dispensation of city living?

I state that it is not! In New York state alone (and this includes churches with memberships into the thousands), there are only 12 churches whose organizations for young people reach more than do ours each week. And, by young people, I mean just that. Our figures do not include 36-60-year-old kibitzers who consider themselves youth!

Enough on statistics, however. It has not been my purpose to belittle the Christian ministry by suggesting that the only response is to the outer appeal of numbers, size, or influence. I simply wish to support my conviction with fact. That conviction is: The rural field *given a chance* can match any city field!

There is another aspect, though, to the problem of challenging men to the work of the rural church. Have you ever considered that many a city-bound man might be attracted to the rural field but holds back, not because he doubts its fitness for him but his fitness for it?

Word of Reassurance

Through long experience many have found that the rural field is a specialized field demanding specialized training. For whatever good it may do, however, may I offer city ministers this word of reassurance from my own experience?

There are those who say that the rural minister has to be born with one thumb green and the other double jointed. It is not my purpose to disparage talents which I do not possess. With all my heart, I sometimes wish that I knew all the answers, that I could be a walking Farm Bureau and a working Cornell Institute. However, I am not! I can now distinguish wheat from corn. I am finally convinced that potatoes do not grow on trees but that's my agricultural progress for the moment.

Meanwhile, things even up. For years in our city church at Harvest Home time, we all feelingly joined in singing, in fact we city-dwellers with our window boxes quite lustily sang: "We Plow the Fields and Scatter." The first year we observed Rural Life Sunday here in the country (the first time, by the way, that Rural Life Sunday had been heard of in these parts) the choir balked at using the same hymn, "We Plow the Fields and Scatter," for the processional. So help me, not one person had ever heard that hymn before! The rural church needs to specialize too.

A Strong Conviction

The longer I continue in the ministry, the stronger is this conviction: for the rural minister to feel that he has to know all the details of his congregation's work down to the cleaning of the chicken coops is as silly as to expect the city minister to know shorthand because he has stenographers or prescription compiling because he has druggists or doctors or, for that matter, the recipe for Aunt Em's secret shortcake because Aunt Em is his parishioner. Chances are that Aunt Em needs to feel superior about something. Happy the minister who knows enough not to be a know-it-all!

No matter where a minister may be, city or country, hamlet or metropolis—people are people; problems are problems; and, rural or urban, sophisticated or simple, they yearn and ask for just one answer: the grace and strength of Christ made real in their lives. Does He, like so many of his ministers, favor city churches? Perhaps He never challenges men to leave the comfort and convenience which clog their creativity!

Consecrated Effort

Consider, for instance, the financial problem. How long would the financial problem of the rural field remain if He had His way, if enough men would give their best years rather than their experimental or their burned out years to the rural church? What the rural church needs is achievement not alibis. What will fill that need is consecrated effort, not concentrated evasion of the rural people on the part of the ministry today!

On a crowded city bus, I once read these words: "Americans will go anywhere—except to the back of a bus!"

Some passengers looked at the sign and smiled. Others looked at it and scowled. But, now and then, here and there, someone looked at it and moved.

Northeastern Pennsylvania Reports

PHILIP N. PITCHER

The Dimock Rural Life Institute assumed a new name: "The rtheastern Pennsylvania Christian ral Fellowship." After five years the narrow confines of the old mock Campground, where facili- s limited it to a summer meeting the midst of the farmer's heavy rk season, it has begun to estab- a pattern of three or four fel- vship and planning meetings, maxed by a fall "on-the-spot" con- ence.

In 1948 the conference was held in open-country community of ring Hill, in Bradford County. So od was the response and so valu- le the discussions that a second n-the-spot" conference was held the fall of 1949 in Tunkhannock, yoming County.

The theme of the 1949 conference s "Town and Country Working gether for Better Rural Living." e subjects for the several sessions "The Expanding Community," an the Expanding Community ovide an Adequate Health Pro- am?" "The Task of Education in e Expanding Community," "The sk of the Church in the Expand- g Community," and "Making our eams Come True by Working To- ther"—reveal much of the content the meetings. They also suggest e reasons for holding the confer- ce in Tunkhannock, which is the yoming County Seat and the nter of county activities in north- stern Pennsylvania.

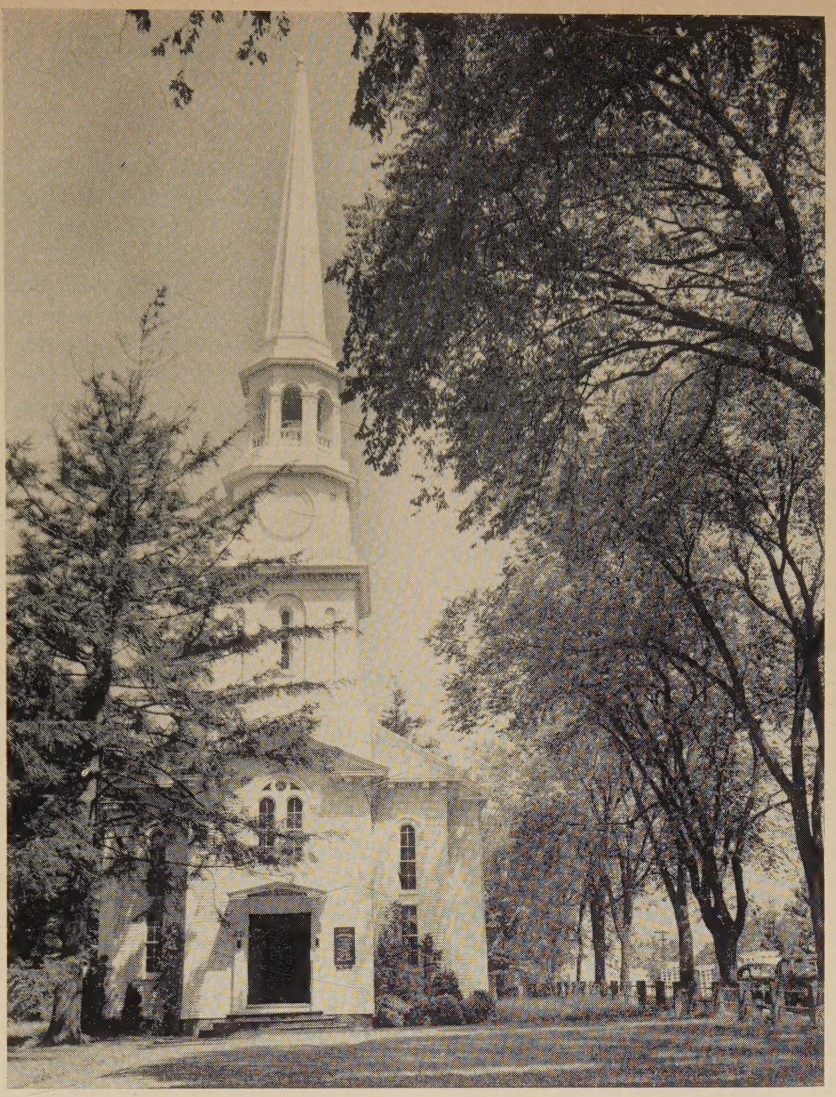
idence of Growth

That the Northeastern Pennsyl- nia Christian Rural Fellowship is owing is evidenced by the fact at, whereas there were never more an forty paid registrations at Di- ock, there were eighty-six at Spring ill in 1948, and one hundred enty-five at Tunkhannock in 1949. Among those present at the Tunk- nnock conference were twenty- e ministers of various denomina- ons, five agricultural extension orkers, four medical doctors, a ntist, a lawyer, two county super- tendents of schools, several high hool principals, one supervising principal, a number of teachers and school directors, the "Bookmobile" librarian who serves three of the counties in this area, and several Grange masters and lecturers. Many of these had a part in the program.

Dr. Mark Rich, Secretary of Town and Country Work, American Baptist Home Mission Society, served as coordinator and discussion leader of the conference. Guest speakers included Samuel Blizzard, Professor of Rural Sociology, Pennsylvania State College of Agriculture; Henry S. Randolph, Secretary, Unit of Rural Work, Board of National Missions, Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A.; Beatty Dimit, Lecturer, Pennsylvania State Grange; and Roswell W. Lyon, Superintendent, Wilkes-Barre District, Wyoming Conference, The Methodist Church.

The Saturday night banquet, honoring the rural ministers of the area, was planned with the hope of providing one answer to the problem of keeping the desirable minister in the rural church. All rural pastors attending this banquet were the guests of the Tunkhannock Kiwanis Club and local business and professional people.

Plans are being made for the 1950 "on-the-spot" conference. Through the year, the executive committee will hold its meetings for fellowship and planning, bringing along friends and rural leaders, and continue to inspire each other in our self-imposed task of "holding up the highest we have."



First Congregational Church
Harwich Center, Mass.

Winston Pote
from A. Devaney, N. Y.

The Four-Square Life

Luke 2:52

CARL W. SAUNDERS

From a sermon given at a Rural Life Sunday service at the Oak Bluffs Methodist Trinity Church, Oak Bluffs, Mass.

• We are happy to welcome members of the 4-H Club as our guests this morning. From all reports the 4-H Club is learning how to put leisure time into good use in creative activities and hobbies. In this community where so little constructive supervision is offered to the youth, we want to encourage all the efforts that are made with appreciative recognition.

The 4-H Club makes a challenging appeal to young people. I suppose this is because all young people are wistful dreamers, dreaming of more ideal homes, more ideal communities, and a more ideal world. The boy Jesus, at twelve years of age, expressed a great dream in the words, "Did you not know that I must be about my Father's business?" It takes youth to dream great dreams. Some adults never lose their wistfulness toward life, and they never lose their youth.

The Pledge

The young person who learns to express creatively the dreams of his life is better equipped to withstand the buffeting of pessimism, doubt and despair in the world of his elders. This is why I feel the 4-H Club has something constructive to offer youth. Listen to their pledge: "I pledge my head to clearer thinking, my heart to greater loyalty, my hands to larger service and my health to better living for my club, my community, and my country." Certainly this is a worthy dream, deserving of sincere efforts to achieve it. And if it is followed through it leads to the Christian religion.

Consider the closeness of the parallel of this pledge to the statement in Luke's gospel describing the youthful years of Jesus: "And Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature, and in favor with God and man." "And Jesus increased in wisdom" parallels "I pledge my head to clear thinking." "And in stature" parallels "I pledge my health to better living." "And in favor with God" parallels "I pledge my heart to greater loyalty." "And man" parallels "I pledge my hands to larger service." This is the Four-Square Life. The parallel is perfect—as far as it goes.

God's Plan

But is there any place where clear thinking can stop? Can one who thinks clearly shut himself up in any compartment of life and say, "Now, I have achieved my goal of clear thinking!" No, for the minute one forms a compartment for life, there clear thinking stops.

To think clearly, one must pursue the meaning of life to the farthest horizon. We cannot think clearly as a white people alone. We cannot think clearly as a black people alone. We cannot think clearly as citizens of the United States alone. We must become citizens of the world. We cannot think clearly and ignore for serious thought the realm of religion and Christianity. Every man's life is a plan of God, and we aren't thinking clearly until we discover God's plan for our life and begin fulfilling that plan with God.

This is the difference between merely thinking clearly and growing in wisdom. The boy Jesus knew his life to be a plan of God. He also knew every other life to be a plan of God, and it hurt him to see how people were destroying God's plan for them. So pledge your head to clear thinking. That is well. But travel far on that road until you come to God.

Also pledge yourself to grow in stature. Pledge your health to better living but go all the way in your health program. It is difficult enough to meet life in good health, so why indulge in those harmful habits which destroy health and personality.

Pledge to Larger Service

Pledge your hands to larger service, but do not be content to serve yourself alone. Serve your family. Serve your community. Serve your church. Serve your nation. But don't stop there. Serve your fellowman, whether he belongs to your church, your school, your community, your nation, or not. Serve him because he is a fellowman. Let there be no stopping place for your helpfulness.

And, of course, pledge your heart to greater loyalty. If one is loyal to God, he cannot be disloyal to his home, school, community, or nation. He may find himself in conflict with accepted standards in these areas, but that would be because those accepted standards are not God-like or Christian.

The 4-H pledge is a long step toward the Four-Square Life. But we all need to go on beyond it, both young and old in years, to reach the full Christian life.

Rural Life Sunday, 1950

• Rural Life Sunday will be observed in 1950 on the fifth Sunday after Easter, Rogation Sunday, May 14, or, if this is not a convenient time, on the last Sunday of April, the 30th.

The Committee on Town and Country again has available an order of service suitable for use by a congregation. The order of service for 1950 was prepared by the Rev. Gaius Glenn Atkins.

In addition to the order of service containing responsive readings and suggested hymns, there is a bibliography and a paragraph on "How to Observe Rural Life Sunday" and data on the origin of Rural Life Sunday.

Copies may be obtained from your cooperating home missions board. If copies are not available through your home missions board, the Committee on Town and Country is prepared to fill orders. Single copies 5¢ each with rates on quantities as follows: 100 copies, $1.00; 250 copies $2.05; 500 copies, $3.30; 1,000 copies $6.00; carriage extra on quantity orders.

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Country Churches Reflect Changes

W. G. MATHER*

• As agriculture has changed and as people have moved or migrated, Pennsylvania rural churches have been affected. Results of these changes and trends are reflected in a recent survey conducted in 27 carefully selected townships.

Where a church has thrived, brief questioning of its pastor is not likely to reveal all of the reasons why it has grown. Similarly, where a church has weakened, the factors involved may be obscure. Subsequent studies may throw further light upon these matters.

Churches and Population

The 27 townships studied contained 21,325 people, served by 121 churches—an average of one church to each 259 persons. However, only 13,957 church members were reported on the rolls—an average membership of 115, ranging from a low of 4 to a high of 676 members. Churches made up largely of farmers were few; there are so many nonfarmers in rural areas that in most rural churches farmers are in a distinct minority.

Most of the churches were smaller than the average of the group. There were 68 churches, or 56 per cent, with less than 100 members and 31 churches, or 26 per cent, had less than 50 members. In the northern and western parts of the state, the average size was 99 members, while in eastern and southern parts the average church had 141 members.

The 13,957 church members reported by the pastors in 1946 constituted 44.5 per cent of the population of those areas as reported in the 1940 census. In the northern and western areas, 39 per cent of the population was on the church rolls; in the southern and eastern areas, 50 per cent.

Members reported as living on farms fell well below their expected number. The 1940 census listed 13,682 farm people in the townships but the pastors reported only 4,652 or 34 per cent on the church membership rosters. The nonfarm membership of 9,305 was 53 per cent of the 17,643 nonfarmers.

Farm and Non-Farm

In the northern and western areas the reported farm membership represented 27 per cent of the farm population and in the southern and eastern areas it was 42 per cent. The nonfarm membership compared to the nonfarm population were 53 and 56 per cent, respectively, in the same areas. While some of the difference between farm and nonfarm representation on the church rolls may be due to under-enumeration by the reporting pastors, it still indicates that rural nonfarm persons are being served to a greater extent than farmers, especially in the north and west sections.

This situation may be partly due to the location of the church buildings. Only 41 of the 121 churches were located in the open country. Seventeen were in communities of less than 100 people, and 63 churches or just over half, were located in incorporated boroughs of less than 1,000 population.

Most of the churches held services every Sunday, with about half the members attending. Smaller churches had services every other Sunday. Nine out of ten churches had Sunday schools, with about two-thirds of their membership attending.

Young People

Only half the churches in the surveys had young people's organizations with the attendance about three-fourths of the average membership of 25. The small churches in particular did not have young people's groups. This is unfortunate as young people make up a large per cent of the rural population.

Two-thirds of the churches reported special organizations for women, such as missionary societies or ladies' aid groups. These organizations had an average membership

* The studies and surveys were conducted by Dorothy Colyer and Maurice Sill on churches serving Pennsylvania farmers and by Theodore Scheifele on closed rural churches.

of 30, and meetings had an average of 16 in attendance.

While the 1940 census reported 105 males per 100 females in the rural nonfarm population of the state, and 116 males per 100 females in the rural farm population, only ten per cent of the churches in the sample rural areas reported special organizations for men.

Only one-fourth of the churches in this survey reported mid-week services.

Three Churches Per Pastor

The 121 churches were served by 94 pastors who had on the average 3 churches each, in and out of the sample townships. These pastors drove an average of 30 miles each Sunday in conducting worship and other public services, or over 1,500 miles a year. None of them reported receiving a mileage allowance from the church. The pastors did not move locations as often as is commonly supposed, having been at their two previous charges from 4 to 5 years; however, there was considerable movement during 1947, the year of the study.

Financial statements were reported by 103 of the 121 churches. The average local expense was $1,456 of which $769, or about half, went toward the pastor's salary. Ninety-five churches reported benevolent gifts, including all money sent to denominational headquarters, missionary gifts, and local charity, averaging $572. The average overall budget reported was $2,028 or $17.63 per member.

Larger churches had larger benevolent giving in proportion to the size of their budgets. Southern and eastern churches gave away 35 per cent of their receipts, and the northern and western churches, smaller on the average, gave away 26 per cent. The cost per member was higher in the smaller churches. However, southern and eastern churches had budgets averaging $17 per member while the northern and western churches averaged $19 per member.

Small churches are often regarded as inefficient units. Considering the activity of the membership, this may not be true, for in addition to coaxing larger per member contributions, the smaller churches in both sections of the state reported a higher percentage of their membership in attendance at public services than did the larger units.

Closed Rural Churches

• "The closed church spells the illness of modern rural economy rather than the illness of the church," writes Theodore C. Scheifele in a recent issue of *The Mennonite Community*, Scottdale, Pa. "The challenge is simply one of being willing to match hard work with equally hard situations."

In a bulletin recently published by the Agricultural Experiment Station at State College, Pa., Theodore Scheifele and William G. Mather have told the story of the closed rural churches in the state of Pennsylvania. The Bulletin is No. 512 and may be procured free of charge from the above address. While the study is confined to Pennsylvania, it should be of interest to those in other states who are concerned about the witness of the Christian church in the country.

Protestant Gets Catholic Rural Life Award

• Dr. Raymond Wiley Miller of Washington, D. C., a Protestant layman, was named by the National Catholic Rural Life Conference as the winner of its 1949 distinguished service award.

A 32nd degree Mason and a member of the board of stewards of The Methodist Church, Dr. Miller has served on the Catholic body's board of directors since 1946. He was cited for upholding the rural group's principles and for his work in "the enrichment of rural living and the welfare of rural people."

In making the award, the Rural Life Conference expressed pleasure that it came "at a time when diverse influences seek to break down the unified good will and spirit of Christian tolerance so desperately needed to rebuild the world."

—Religious News Service

The Silent Miracle of Recurring Life

• Once more the axis of our little planet spinning among the stars has tilted its northern latitudes toward the benign light of the sun. With many backward looks winter has begun its annual retreat before the advancing hosts of spring, and now for a half-year the north temperate zone will do what it can to recapture its good name.

Everywhere the grasses have sprung to life and buds are swelling as sap creeps upward in dormant trunks. Any day now the miracle of the leafing of the trees will start. Too easily we take this miracle for granted. Perhaps it is because it occurs without a sound, without a sign of strain or struggle. But each year, within a few weeks, innumerable millions of plants clothe themselves with green.

Consider how many human hands would be required to make enough artificial leaves to equal the annual foliage of our trees—and those thus made all imperfect. Perhaps we should be thankful that in nature's serene world there are no strikes! Instead, when their time has fully come, the trees put forth their verdure—silently, swiftly, surely.

No greater compliment has been given man than that voiced by Jeremiah: "Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord, to whom the Lord is his confidence! He shall be like a tree planted by waters, that sends out its roots to the stream; and is not afraid when heat comes, for its leaves remain green; nor is anxious in a year of drought, for it ceases not to bear fruit."

—*The Christian Century*

Baptist Leaflets

• As parts of a regular series of publications on town and country church methods, the American Baptist Home Mission Society, 212 Fifth Avenue, New York 10, N. Y., has published the following titles:

"Design for a Functioning Church Through a Church Council," by Le Roy J. Day.

"Do You Have a Productive Home?" by Maxwell T. Powers.

Taking Our Chances

RALPH W. SOCKMAN

What part does the element of ance play in life? Long centuries o a realistic writer looked out on his world and came to this nclusion: "The race is not to the ift nor the battle to the strong, ither yet bread to the wise nor hes to the man of understanding, r yet favor to the man of skill: t time and chance happeneth to em all."

No doubt most of us could parallel ose observations of Ecclesiastes th some of our own. We have seen ough of life to note that the prizes not always go to the most de- rving nor wealth to the wisest. nd in many a case the only ex- anation we can give is the old one Ecclesiastes, namely, chance. Cer- inly our life courses are shaped in rt by the events which befall us nd the places in which, as we say, ur lot is cast.

There is a second thing we can so say: The way we face this factor chance helps to determine the irit and quality of our lives.

he Trained Mind

Perhaps you recall how Louis asteur discovered the principle of ccination. He had been studying ne diseases of sheep and hogs. He ad taken serum containing germs om infected animals, and was de- eloping the cultures in his labora- ry. During a vacation season, his ssistant failed to feed the cultures roperly, and on his return Pasteur ound them in a half-dead condition.

Taking those enfeebled germs, asteur injected them into healthy nimals, and discovered the principle vaccination. His critics taunted im, saying that he had stumbled n it. "It came by chance," they ocked. Pasteur replied simply, True, but chance favors the trained ind."

When we take chances without rst taking thought and all possible reparation, we run counter to hrist's teaching.

Also, we weaken character when we count on chance as a short cut to fortune or reward. Walk through the Casino at Monte Carlo, or note the people who habitually play the races in America, and you will see the demoralizing effect of the gambling spirit.

"Sow Thy Seed"

We may, however, so treat this fact of chance that it calls forth the best in us. For one thing, it helps to beget faith. The writer of Ecclesiastes said, "Time and chance happeneth to them all." But he also said: "In the morning sow thy seed and in the evening withhold not thine hand; for thou knowest not which shall prosper, whether this or that."

The farmer is taking a chance, but not like the gambler at the roulette table. The gambler is counting on chance, while the farmer is trying to conquer chance; and in that effort he develops his patience, his resourcefulness and his wisdom. In the struggle against drought and dust storms, against floods and tornadoes, the brave farmers of the west have lengthened their perspective, expanded their programs and strengthened their characters.

The Essence of Love

Moreover, it is the presence of chance which produces the non-calculating spirit of true love. There could be no genuine love in a cut-and-dried world where rewards were guaranteed. It is the essence of love to give without asking what it is to get. This is the point of Jesus' parable of the laborers in the vineyard.

Recall the occasion as given by Matthew. A rich young man had come to Jesus asking how he could inherit eternal life. Jesus, seeing that he was wedded to his possessions, tested his willingness to sacrifice by bidding him sell what he had and give to the poor. The apostle, Peter, overhearing the conversation, seems to have fallen into a calculating mood, for he said to Jesus: "Lo, we have left all to follow thee, what then shall we have?"

Life cannot be lived at its best on the basis of concrete guaranteed rewards. If we are to beget the qualities of faith and patience and hope and love, we must give ourselves when we cannot see the guarantees. Our world is our Father's house, wherein we take the chances which sons take with fathers and fathers take with children, thereby rising to the spirit of love and faith and hope which makes life worth living.

The Harvest

And now having seen that chance is a real factor in life, and that the way we face it helps to determine the quality of life, we can say a third thing. In the realm of the spirit, "whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap."

The elements of chance may make life at times seem like a lottery on the material level, but not so on the spiritual level. The farmer sowing his wheat in the ground may not always get back his crop of wheat, but the spirit of patience he puts into his work brings forth a harvest of greater patience. The wise man, as Ecclesiastes said, may not always get wealth in return for his wisdom, but by putting intelligence into his work he gets more wisdom. The man of skill may not always receive financial compensation for his workmanship, but the skill he puts into his work begets greater skill. And so it goes. The spirit we put into our labors brings in return more of that same spirit—if goodness, more goodness; if beauty, more beauty; if love, more love.

Do we not often lose faith in prayer because we look for its answer in the wrong place? If it is true, as Jesus said, that God is a spirit and must be worshipped in spirit, does it not follow that we must expect the answers to that worship to come in and through the spirit?

"Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap"—more of the same spirit. And this spiritual harvest is what makes our heaven or our hell.

(From a sermon delivered on the "National Radio Pulpit" program, WNBC, New York)

The Parable of the Talents

JOHN A. WESTIN

• Recently the members and friends of the Eatontown, N. J., Presbyterian Church worked out a talent program which proved to be a distinct success, both financially and spiritually. Talents of $3.00 were given to seventy-two members and friends of the congregation which, over a period of twenty weeks, earned through faithful endeavor a total of $2,433. Our motto throughout the project was "A Walking Parable with a Working Talent." This program can be applied in any rural church.

Organization

Just previous to the time of the talent program, it became necessary to refinance the mortgage on the manse. Also, the church building was in need of outside paint and considerable repairs. After discussion, it was decided that the proceeds from the talent program would be used to finance these needs. A committee of representatives from the board of trustees, young people's group, choir, women's group and Sunday school was appointed to organize the work of the program.

Talents Distributed

It was during a morning service that our congregation began this project which was destined to be of historical significance for our little church. Stewardship hymns were sung, and the Parable of the Talents (as recorded by both Matthew in the 25th chapter and Luke in the 19th chapter) was read. The minister spoke of taking the parable literally, and pointed out that the parable is divided into three parts, the first being the distribution of the talents, followed by a period of time in which they were to be put to work, concluding with the day of accounting.

He contrasted the joy and blessings of those who were faithful and the disgrace and loss of the one who hid his talent, and called to their attention the fact that this principle of stewardship is applicable to every phase of life. We are given many talents, such as time and abilities, for which we will be held accountable, and we prosper according to the way in which we apply the responsibility which has been entrusted to us.

The minister brought out the most important lesson for the steward—faithfulness. It matters little to the Lord how many talents we have so long as we faithfully use that which we receive. So, each one receiving the church talent was required to be a faithful steward of the $3.00 from the very start. After all had received their talents, the congregation rose and sang the hymn, "Blest Be the Tie that Binds." Following the benediction, each went forth to become a "walking parable with a working talent."

Talents at Work

The main emphasis was placed upon the individual and his own talent, and during the ensuing week the following methods of increasing individual talents were reported: selling greeting cards; giving commissions made on insurance policies; making party favors; baking; knitting mittens; making orange marmalade; selling name labels for use on letters, books, gifts, etc.; knitting bookmarks, afghans, and slippers; making costume jewelry, etc.

In addition to the projects of individuals for increasing their talents, the various groups of our church had their projects too. The young people held a cake sale. The young boys organized "Odd Jobs Incorporated," offering to cut grass, run errands, wash cars and do other miscellaneous jobs. Another activity was to secure subscriptions to the local weekly newspaper. The scrap collections, made one Saturday afternoon each month, were a surprising source of revenue. The whole community assisted so that about 30,000 pounds of paper were collected. The rummage sale, which had an unusual number of useful articles, was a big success.

By far the largest group activity was the auction. A professional auctioneer contributed his services for the day and his assistance and advice were invaluable. Beginning several months in advance, the auction committee made weekly pick-ups of usable articles at the homes in the community. Items that needed painting and repair were given special treatment. A number of local merchants donated new articles. Altogether, the auction activities added over $500 toward the goal.

The Ingathering

The anticipated hour had come. The Sunday school pupils who had faithfully saved their pennies to paint the church, along with the talenteers and many interested friends assembled for the morning worship service. Dr. J. Christy Wilson of the Princeton Theological Seminary faculty was present as the guest speaker. During the early part of the service, each person brought forward his talent and the increase, received congratulations from the pastor and had his name written into the official records of the church

After the last box and envelope had been received, the Talent Committee retired to an adjoining room to count the increase. Following Dr. Wilson's sermon on Christian Stewardship, two new members were welcomed into the fellowship of the church. This was an evidence of spiritual as well as material growth during the twenty-week period. To climax this unique worship service,

e committee was able to report at a total of $2,433 had been thered into the storehouse of God. At an official congregational meeting held shortly thereafter, it was ted to apply $1,000 toward the duction of the mortgage on the anse, while the balance would be ed to repair and paint the church.

dvantages of Inaugurating Talent Program

A new interest has been manifested the Sunday services and in regular ving, due to the practical lessons in operation and stewardship. Several our newer members have been ven places of leadership in the urch and have proved worthy of e responsibility. Through such a rogram, money can be collected for particular objective which might herwise never be reached.

ome Practical Suggestions

1. Secure the whole-hearted interest and cooperation of the church y talking about it in advance for veral months.

2. Select a chairman and committee who are known to be faithful nd dependable, and who will work ell together for the success of the lan.

3. Have it clearly understood om the very beginning what the ncrease will be used for.

4. Encourage the people to put eir talents to work immediately.

"Christ for Changing Countryside"

The National Lutheran Council, hicago, publishes a pamphlet on e title above. Many changes have ome to the countryside, largely as result of the introduction of achinery. "Creating a new heart" the great task, so as to give character to the mechanized rural communities of tomorrow.

"We need men and women whose haracters have been tempered in he fire of repentance—personalities who live in fellowship with God nd from that fellowship draw the nspiration to live unselfishly for eir fellowmen."

Concern for Agricultural Migrants

• Believing that the church's responsibility towards the nation's 1,500,000 migrant agricultural workers and their families is too seldom protected by social legislation or given the help it needs from the communities whose crops they harvest, the Home Missions Council of North America recently sponsored a discussion conference at Chicago, Ill.

Defining the present situation Miss Edith Lowry, co-executive secretary of the Home Missions Council and head of its migrant program, said that burdens of employment, low incomes and ill health which oppress migratory workers today are similar to those encountered by the Council when it first entered the migrant field in 1920 and, although the public and the church have manifested a growing concern for the welfare of these workers, "migrants are still haunted by antagonistic community attitudes and an inferior social status."

It was pointed out that New York and New Jersey are gradually making available to migrants the same welfare benefits that are available to their own residents—including health, welfare services, education, and minimum housing standards —and that the results have been most effective.

The group recommended strongly that all states extend such protection to migrants, who have suffered because few are residents of any state.

The conference asked the Home Missions Council to arrange meetings with representatives of agricultural and community groups with a view to working out methods for the permanent settlement of migrants and to develop year-round employment opportunities.

Until such long-range aims can be reached, however, the specific problem of the housing for workers as they move from harvest to harvest must be considered. One of the important factors in improved housing during recent years has been the model labor camps established by the Farm Security Administration. There are still fifty-six such camps in the hands of the Federal government, but they have been earmarked by Congress for liquidation by June 30, 1950.

Conference delegates recommended that these camps remain under the control of a public agency. To avoid centralized control and to insure local support, it was advocated that the camps be administered by a local housing authority.

It was pointed out that the migrant problem will become increasingly serious as social gains made during the wartime labor shortage are weakened by increased farm mechanization, a labor surplus and the importation of alien agricultural labor from Mexico and the British West Indies.

Some of these factors are beyond control—the progress of mechanization in agriculture, industrial recession, and the return of servicemen to civilian jobs, which tend to glut an already filled agricultural labor market. However, action can be taken on the problem of alien labor.

In summing up their findings, the delegates made a strong appeal that the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights be made applicable to the migrant worker.

They called upon the churches to help win for migrants the principles embodied in that document which are now too often denied them—favorable working conditions, protection against unemployment and an adequate standard of living.

A Service for Rural Churches

• James E. Hankins, a Methodist minister, has recently edited a folio of mimeograph tracings for rural ministers. The folio contains 100 pages of illustrations with several other pages of helpful hints on effective and economic mimeographing.

The Dunhan folio is attractively bound in a sturdy three-ring binder and covered with green leatherette.

All illustrations are drawn by a commercial artist.

The folio sells for $2.75. Orders and inquiries should be addressed to Dunhan Rural Church Service, Piney Flats, Tennessee.

When the Missionary Visits Your Town

CARLTON W. SAYWELL

• The visit of one of our missionaries to your church can be an enlightening, thrilling experience for everyone. In our day of rocket speeds and atomic closeness, everyone is thinking about his neighbor across the continent or across the sea and ought to know him better if we are to have world brotherhood. From firsthand, personal contact with people at home and abroad our missionaries know the story of what is happening around the world. There is no one more able to bring us a knowledge of the spiritual, physical, and social needs of others than one of our Northern Baptist missionaries. As the supporters of our missionaries, the members of every Baptist church, great or small, should know about the work of these people and what they can do to help them win others for Christ and His great kingdom enterprise.

The visit of the missionary in a town and country church can be much more helpful and effective if the church will make certain plans and preparations for his coming. The following suggestions are offered to help make the missionary's visit in your church more significant.

1. *Make Your Wants Known*

When you want a missionary to visit your church, correspond with your state secretary or director or board of missions and find out when a missionary is scheduled to be in your state. It is impossible to produce a missionary by rubbing Aladdin's lamp, so do not expect to have someone come on a moment's notice. Make your plans months in advance. Many denominations have awakened to the tremendous importance of the town and country church and its place in our great denomination. It is our hope in Iowa that at least once a year every church may be visited by a missionary.

2. *When the Date is Set*

When you know you are to have a missionary begin planning for the visit at once. The pastor should appoint a special committee, or the regular church missionary committee should be responsible for making the event known and a real success. Time and time again in my travels among small churches I have asked, "Did you enjoy the missionary last week?" "What missionary?" "The man from Africa who visited your church on Thursday night." And then, "I didn't know a thing about it." The event was not properly advertised.

3. *The Committee Goes to Work*

At least six weeks prior to the missionary's coming to the church, the committee should get busy on advertising. Get a good story in the church bulletin and parish paper. I have always found young people ready for a poster contest. Be sure you give them the right name, dates, and country and type of work to be presented by the missionary. Show the posters in the church and then place them in the store windows in town. Why not give prizes for the posters that have some relationship to the missionary's work or field?

There should be, by all means, a picture of the missionary and several stories of his work in the local paper for two or three consecutive weeks in advance. Of course, the committee will not forget to use the telephone, penny cards, special notes pinned on the primary children's shirts and dresses, and church and town bulletin boards. Let's let the whole town know that we believe in our missionaries.

4. *There He Is!*

A wide awake committee will certainly have a friendly group of people at the depot to meet the missionary. Let him know you are glad he has come. Did it ever occur to you that appreciation and encouragement and love are the things he needs most while he's here at home? Surely all of our missionaries get tired and discouraged sometimes. The town and country churches of our Northern Baptist Convention, 4,000 strong, can do a great job of undergirding our missionaries. Let the missionary know that you are his friend and that you have faith in him. I have seen a missionary's whole attitude toward the homeland and our American churches changed by a country church that really showed that it cared for him and his work.

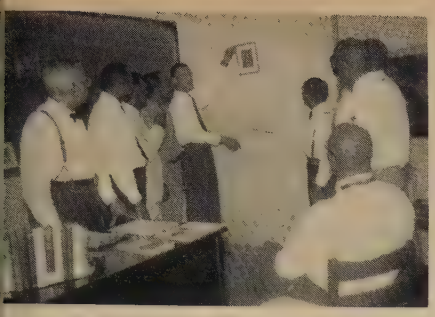
5. *Make the Day Count*

Sometimes a week-day visit by the missionary can be more profitable than a Sunday visit. The grade school, high school, or college would greatly appreciate a talk or lecture. This again means planning and preparation. Be sure you let the missionary know before he comes what is expected of him. If your town has a Kiwanis or Rotary Club, or a Chamber of Commerce, by all means make arrangements for your visitor to tell his story. Many women's clubs are also eager to have a missionary as guest speaker. Be sure someone goes with your new friend to these meetings. It would be better if a layman or two, as well as the local minister, could go with him.

A rest in the afternoon might be greatly appreciated. Long hours of travel, noisy hotels, crowded trains day in, day out, week in and week out, are tiring. Take the missionary to someone's home. Pastors, it's nice for you to have the missionary in your home, but your church will gain more if you have him stay with some of your lay people. Personal ties and relationships will be formed with your church members that will never be broken.

Why not plan a covered dish supper for the evening and have the missionary speak informally at the table. Be sure to allow plenty of time for questions. A short missionary drama put on by the young people could be used most effectively right after supper. This helps to get more young people out and develops in them a sense of missionary zeal.

If the missionary comes on Sunday, you will want him to become acquainted with your Sunday school. Don't forget the little folks, either. Of course you wrote him as soon as you heard he was coming, asking



t an in-service training institute at Shaw niversity, Raleigh, N. C., the Rev. Moses . DeLaney is shown instructing a class in ne educational values of Christian art in the work of the church.

im to be sure to bring some curios nd items of interest for the chil-ren.

The morning service will be built round a missionary theme. The ymns, the choir number, the cripture selection, the prayer will ll emphasize missions. Surely you ill take advantage of the offering ime to say something about your hurch's missionary giving.

Many town and country churches ring a bountiful basket lunch and ll gather around the tables after he morning service. Often, in the ummer, the tables are set under a ig shade tree in the yard. When inner is over, the missionary brings nother message. Another way to pend Sunday afternoon might be or the women to invite the whole hurch to a missionary tea with the missionary as the honored guest. This would be in the nature of an informal get-acquainted time and provide an opportunity for ques-ions and discussion.

Another gracious thing your church can do is to have someone take your missionary around in a car to see your community and per-haps visit some of the farms and other points of interest. There might be a shut-in or two who would re-joice in a chance to meet one of our missionaries.

Many rural churches enjoy having a buffet supper on Sunday night. The missionary could then speak to the young people and later to the evening service. This service ought to be less formal and an opportunity given for questions at the close of the message. Why not close the eve-ning with a fellowship time and serve some light refreshments characteristic of the country or people the missionary is ministering to. The library is always ready to help provide books with suggestions for foods from other lands. Person-ally, I have always found by writing to the missionary in advance that he would give suggestions. What a lot of pleasure some of them have re-ceived helping to prepare some na-tive delicacy! Many of our mission-aries now have moving pictures or Kodachrome slides of their work which they will be glad to bring and show for your church if you ask them in advance. You can always write to the missionary at your state office. His mail will be forwarded to him.

6. *Good-Bye*

And now it's time to say "good-bye." Again, try to have a group at the bus or train to see the guest on his way. If your missionary is a woman, why not present her with a corsage, or if a man, why not send a box of candy to his wife. Then, too, some thoughtful gift would help to keep a warm place in this new friend's heart for your church. Why not give a Kodachrome camera and make arrangements to send him film and have him send your church pictures of his work? Show your missionary that you love him.

Be sure to have your missionary sign the church guest book. The young people will surely bring their autograph books for his autograph. Then, too, your members will want his full address so that they can write to him. The missionary's visit can be a *red-letter* day in the history of your church.

Note: Every suggestion made in this article has been actually used in my own town and country pas-torates.

Crop Dedication Prayer

• When the 1949 CROP campaign for carloads of grain for needy per-sons abroad was concluded a nation-wide dedication service was held. The prayer offered for the Christian Rural Overseas Program was:

"Our Father, We come to Thee today in humble thankfulness for the rich harvest of life-giving prod-ucts from the fruitful earth. For the earth is the Lord's and the full-ness thereof. We thank Thee for our daily bread from the fullness of the earth. And, on this Sabbath, we thank Thee for the opportunity to turn our eyes and our hearts across our bountiful fields, across our meadows, our gardens and our homes to our neighbors over all the earth. For Thou hast made of one blood all nations of men to dwell on all the face of the earth. We know that many of our neigh-bors over the earth are in want for their daily bread, for clothing, for shelter, and yes, for Christian love. We pray that our efforts to share life's material goods with them, through Christian giving in Thy name, will follow the gleam to ful-fillment of Thy Kingdom. Give us the strength to be merciful to them, as our Father is merciful. Give us the faith of our fathers, the faith to hold high the cross of Christian brotherhood through our help to our brothers across the vast plains, the towering mountains and the deep seas. Thus can we love Thee with all our heart, and with all our soul, and with all our strength, and with all our mind. This we pray, so that we shall inherit eternal life in service to Thee. *Amen.*"

Purposes of This Journal

The purposes of this Journal are:

A. To encourage cooperation among rural churches.

B. To improve the administra-tion of the local church, this to in-clude organization of the church, finance, religious education, com-munity relationships, and the train-ing of lay leadership.

C. To stimulate the development of a Christian philosophy of rural life, this to embrace ethical issues in agriculture, social reconstruction, and government programs; and the content of the minister's message.

Part of Larger Program

The Journal is an important part of an enlarged "cooperative rural church program" that will encour-age a national "rural church move-ment."

Want to Earn a Book?

• The Committee on Town and Country has voted to present a copy of a forthcoming book—*Rural Prospect,* by Mark Rich—to any reader who will secure ten new subscriptions to TOWN AND COUNTRY CHURCH at $1.00 each.

Reasonable quantities of circulars (and samples while our supply lasts) will be sent to you if you'll send a card letting us know how many you can use.

We recommend securing subscriptions at meetings of county ministerial associations, within a congregation, at community gatherings, or at conferences you may be attending.

The book, *Rural Prospect,* will be published soon by the Friendship Press, New York. The price, cloth bound, will be $1.50 a copy. Dr. Rich directs rural church service programs for the American Baptist Home Mission Society.

Here are paragraphs describing this most valuable book:

"Flanked by an impressive array of carefully researched facts and striking pictographic illustrations, Dr. Rich's forthcoming book is a provocative new religio-sociological commentary. Speaking of some churches that grew while others withered, he penetrates the how, what, when, and why these things happened.

"Backed by facts, the author eloquently presses home his thesis of the total community as the church's proper sphere. He cautions against the church narrowing its attentions to its immediate constituency or to purely religious matters only or to restricted clusters of population, economic, social, geographical, or otherwise.

"Of prime interest to his readers, Dr. Rich shows through example after example how churches once virtually empty are now filled to capacity as the result of the practical extension of Christian service by apostles of community life. And while warning churchmen against too much narrowness of operation, he also raises a signal against that kind of 'global-mindedness' that can, potentially, cause the church to lose its central position of influence in neighborhood and local community life.

"*Rural Prospect* is an encouraging and constructive book, cornerstoned in solid fact and tangibly pointing up immediate solutions to one of the most pressing church problems of the day and decade. Said Don F. Pielstick of the Home Missions Council: 'I feel that this is a very excellent piece of work. It is readable, there is a delightful sense of movement, and . . . Dr. Rich has exercised keen judgment in the balance between factual data, illustrative matter, and creative assertions.' "

The Anglican Rural Church in Canada

• Long-term plans to guard our great natural resources are being made throughout the world by government agencies, industrialists, rural sociologists, and by the clergy of all major denominations.

The Anglican Outlook, Valois, P. Q., presents from time to time articles which tell of the advance of the rural church movement in Canada. In a recent issue Lloyd J. Delaney stated that "rural communities will be aided by secular agencies, but not redeemed by them. Their redemption can only be truly wrought by a devoted ministry, bringing God into the lives of the people, leading them to build up a Christian countryside."

The Rev. Lloyd Delaney is rector of a rural church in the diocese of Toronto, and was recently granted a special award by the Episcopal Church in the U.S. for his "humility, sincerity, and devotion to the cause of the Church in Rural Canada." This was the first time the award had been given to a Canadian.

As chairman of the committee on the Anglican Church in Rural Areas, Mr. Delaney has helped to make and carry out plans for the Mono Mills Training School for students going into rural work. This school gives intensive "on the ground" courses in the work of the rural parish and courses in religious education and rural sociology.

Gospel Into Homes

• I came to serve the Baptist churches of Naples and Bristol Springs, N. Y. nineteen years ago, and have found that taking the Gospel of Christ directly into the homes of the people has met a need that would otherwise not have been met.

Every Thursday evening we have a mid-week meeting at Bristol Springs. This is held in the homes, and is attended largely by those of school age, children and young people. We often have twenty-five or more present at these meetings, and we have singing, prayers and Bible study.

We try to do the same at Naples Wednesday evenings, but Naples is a village and there our success with children and young people is not great.

The second Saturday of each month (from three till five in the afternoon) we have a children's meeting for Bible study and for games. Often we meet in the homes of the children. Sometimes instead of games we go hiking, or have pictures. We have the same thing for a different group the third Saturday, and for still a different group the fourth Saturday. This last is for an older group.

We also have three groups of adults, and one of whole families meeting once a month—all in homes. These are social and promotional groups.

For the past few years I have made use of pictures in home meetings. Often I do this for shut-ins. We have recently made a tour of western states by means of pictures. I believe I have shown the Christmas pictures and the Easter pictures twenty-five times within the past two years.

Often the farm family invites friends and relatives as well as neighbors. In this way one meeting leads to another.

What I am doing in taking the Gospel and Christ to the homes is only a small part of what I might do if I had more evenings, and more strength. But then, I am the pastor of two country churches, and have other things to do.

—DARIUS M. RATCLIFF

This Is How We Did It

The Harrison County (Missouri) Larger Parish

MARVIN T. JUDY

The population of Harrison County is 17,000, 5,150 in its county seat and its five other towns and villages, and 12,950 in the open country. It is a good agricultural area, ranking second to the best in the state. Sixty-five per cent of the farms are owner-operated.

Within the county there are four missionary Baptist churches, eight Disciples of Christ, two United Brethren, one Free Methodist, three Assemblies of God, two small Catholic congregations, and twenty-one Methodist churches. This means that there are approximately four hundred people for each church. There is scarcely any over-lapping of denominations except in the small towns. Forty years ago most of the country churches were very active, but due to a decrease of 7,000 in population in thirty years, many of the open country churches have had decided reverses.

Larger Parish Program

When the Harrison County Larger Parish was organized in 1946, the district superintendent persuaded all the churches in the county to cooperate. At the present time we have twenty-one churches in the county and six churches from adjoining counties, making a total of twenty-seven, and seven pastors in the parish.

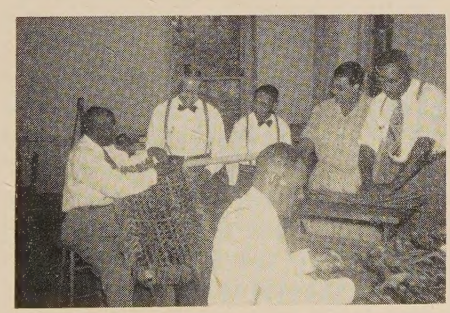
The heart of the parish program is the monthly preacher's meeting. This meeting begins with a "Pot-luck" supper for the ministers and their families at one of the parsonage homes. After the supper the ministers retire to another room or to the nearby church for a business meeting. This fellowship provides a very happy relationship among families in the parish. One of the greatest needs in the rural field is association with others.

The business meeting of ministers provides uniformity of program, long-time planning, in-service training for the inexperienced minister. Three of our ministers are college and seminary graduates. Four are supply pastors having only high school education. Thus there is a great need for guidance in the program of the church. The work of the supply pastors is made much more effective through the monthly plan meetings.

The parish council, composed of two delegates from each congregation, meets once each quarter. This council helps to guide the total program of the parish and establish policies for the local church to follow. It is now undertaking a project of the building of a youth camp within the parish.

A four-page paper is circulated to each home in the parish once a month. This is mailed from the parish director's office to about 1400 homes. It carries announcements, timely articles and news of the churches. A directory of preaching schedules is always a part of the paper. The cost of the paper is about forty cents per family per year. This is met out of the budgets of the cooperating churches.

The first Sunday in August is designated as "Parish Day." On this day all congregations meet together at an open-air pavilion for all-day services. The activities of the day consist of church school classes, formal morning worship services, basket dinner, an afternoon program, and preaching. Such a day gives to the participating churches a sense of belonging to something of large proportions. It is also a demonstration of unity and cooperation. It affords an opportunity for a large group of people to hear outstanding church leaders.



Rural ministers learning handicrafts at an in-service training institute at Shaw University, Raleigh, N. C.

The Charge Unit Plan

We do not have an over-all parish staff serving all of the churches in the area. Each pastor has his own charge made up of from one to eight churches from which he draws his entire support. We feel that the building of strong charges makes for a stronger program, and even though the parish program may sometime cease to be strong charges have been built which will continue through the years.

Within the charges we are operating a cooperative financial program. Each church on the charge accepts its proportionate share of this budget and makes regular payments to it through one charge treasurer. The one treasurer then pays all items of the budget. This plan has greatly strengthened the feeling of unity among the churches of the charge. It is no longer a traditional "circuit" composed of one pastor who serves individual units, but is a charge operating one program even though there are several units or churches in it. In one of these charges the budget is now well over $5,000 for the operating of the charge. There are 500 members, an average of 244 attending church school with a staff of 72 officers and teachers, and an official board of 76 members. Regular official board meetings have now been held in this charge. It is definitely aiding to lead from an attitude of defeatism to optimism.

Simultaneous Action

Doing things together in the parish has proved very effective. A simultaneous evangelistic campaign was held a year ago in which seventeen churches conducted evangelistic services simultaneously. It was a means of inspiration to ministers and people.

Vacation Bible schools have jumped from three before the parish was started to eighteen, with a total enrollment of over 800 children.

The Lord's Acre plan has been adopted by twenty-one churches in the parish. Two years ago eighteen churches used the plan, receiving $14,000 through this source. Last

year twenty-one churches received $18,000. Before the parish program began there were no Lord's Acre programs.

We know we do not have the answer to all of the problems of the rural church in the Larger Parish. But by and large, we feel we are moving in the right direction to answer many of the problems of the rural church and the rural ministry.

Spring Convocation

• The Colgate-Rochester Divinity School, Rochester, N. Y., will hold its Twentieth Annual Spring Convocation on April 10-13 of this year.

One of the features of the Convocation will be the endowed Rauschenbusch Lectures, given by David E. Lindstrom, rural sociologist of the University of Illinois and author of *Rural Life and the Church, American Rural Life,* and other books which depict the movements, organizations and trends in rural America as they affect the church. Dr. Lindstrom's topic for the four Rauschenbusch Lectures will be "Christian Principles in Rural Life."

Ministers who wish to attend this Convocation should file their intention with President Wilbour Eddy Saunders, with the registration fee of $2.00.

Rural Worship Seminars in 1950

• In cooperation with the Committee on Town and Country, the Commission on Worship of the Federal Council of Churches is planning special emphasis upon Worship Seminars in rural areas during 1950 when the study emphasis is on the town and country church. Such seminars may be held under the sponsorship of local ministerial associations, county and state councils of churches, theological seminaries, and other organizations related to the life of the church in rural areas.

Those interested in obtaining further information about a Seminar on Worship should communicate with the Rev. Deane Edwards, 297 Fourth Avenue, New York 10, N. Y.

This Is How We Did It

ROBERT T. FRERICHS

• Can a small church have a successful graded choir program? The Federated Church of Sandwich, Illinois, having slightly more than three hundred members, had to face that question when, four years ago, its thriving junior choir began to outgrow its choir loft.

The original junior choir included boys and girls from the fourth through the eighth grades, a five-year age span which is quite common in small junior choirs. Its membership grew from twenty to nearly forty in two years, and could not be seated in its choir loft when everyone was present. The obvious solution was to organize a junior high choir, and thus divide the group into two more easily managed groups. But this meant a third choir loft in the church, more music, more work on the part of the director and accompanist, and a rethinking of the future program of the church.

Under the leadership of the pastor and his wife, who had been appointed minister of music, long sessions were spent with the Finance Committee to determine whether the church would be wise to embark upon a growing program of graded choral music.

The Program

The program was undertaken when it became clear that it would check the losses of young people during the critical junior high and high school years, and would also mean a significant strengthening of the spiritual, educational, evangelistic and fellowship program of the church. The new program was to be carefully integrated with the church school and youth fellowship programs, and was to maintain a high spiritual and musical standard.

The Music Committee helped make plans, and organized junior and junior high mothers' groups who help every Sunday with the robing, keep the robes clean and mended, furnish treats for the children, and help constructively to maintain high morale and loyalty among the children.

The junior choir children rehearse every Thursday afternoon after school. They learn simple anthems during the first part of the year; then, for the Christmas concert and later, they begin to sing anthems with descants or two-part anthems.

At the end of three years in the junior choir, the children graduate to the junior high choir, composed of seventh and eighth grade boys and girls, when two or three-part music is used almost entirely, and when special opportunities are presented for the more talented singers. The Junior High Girls' Sextet is a select group which sings three-part music for girls.

The rehearsal of the junior high choir is held as a part of the three-hour Sunday evening program for this age group beginning at 5:00 P.M. with a solid hour of musical work. Then comes supper, served by the mothers of the children in the Junior High Fellowship. After supper, under the guidance of one of their sponsors, the group has its business meeting, program and social hour, with adjournment at 8:00 P.M.

Graduation from junior high marks the entry of most of the young people into the senior choir and into the special high school groups, which include the famous Federated Girls' Octet and the Boys' Chorus. For girls, membership in the Octet marks the highest honor in the music program. This group, entered only by try-outs and open only to high school girls in the music program, meets every Monday night for a special one-hour rehearsal, and is always in demand for special concerts. For two years the Octet has made annual tours of churches in Illinois and Iowa, and has sung numerous full-evening concerts of sacred choral music, assisted by its leader.

The boys' chorus, begun only two years ago, has already appeared in several of the Octet concerts. Open to all high school boys, it sings male quartet arrangements of fine sacred music, and rehearses for an hour every Sunday morning.

The senior choir, in addition to

leadership of the worship service
h the other choirs, presents at
st two and sometimes three con-
ts a year. The Christmas concert
given jointly by all the groups;
Easter, the senior choir presents
annual *Messiah* concert, and
ually shares with the other choirs
a spring "all-request" program,
in the singing of great choral
rks such as Mendelssohn's *Elijah*.
rty-three members make up the
ior choir now. Members of this
oir are also privileged to have
ivate voice lessons from the min-
er of music, and most of these
pils have sung solo parts in the
urch services and in concerts.

But the senior choir is not just
high school students. The bal-
ce of young and mature voices
s been found to provide the best
ssible results for church choral
ging.

The church, because it appreciates
musical leadership, has for the
st six years given children in its
usic program the gift of a week
camp, provided they have met the
gh requirements of their choir
ogram. Every year from forty to
ty boys and girls go with their
aders to The Federated Music
amp at East Bay on Lake Bloom-
gton, Ill., for from four to six
ys, with the expenses being paid
the church. At camp, classes are
ld in creative music and worship
r the children, while the high
hool young people act as coun-
llors and are trained in Christian
adership.

After the first four years of this
panded program, the church has
swered the question, "Can it be
ne?" with an enthusiastic affirma-
ve. Church school enrollment has
creased by one hundred per cent.
any new families have been at-
acted to the church by its pro-
am for children and youth, al-
ough strict rules forbid the en-
lling of choir members who are
lated to the other churches in the
mmunity.

Our experience has shown that
ildren who grow up in the music
d educational program of a
urch which requires high stand-
ds of them are members who take
their church very seriously and are active leaders in its work.

This Is How We Did It

LAWRENCE DRY

• The Federated Church of Mitchell, Nebraska, (Disciples and Congregational) is a fellowship of people from twenty-one denominations working together in harmony. Starting thirty-three years ago, the federation is stronger today than ever. It has always been very active in community projects and services, and this is probably the secret of its success in the community.

We have always exalted the importance and necessity of the church, and have never presented it as a kind of social club. We think of the church as the life of God in the hearts of men, seeking efficiency through organization. We believe that the type of denominational organization is not so important as is the spirit of Jesus in the lives of our people.

In addition to preaching and practicing the equality of denominations, we of the Mitchell Federated Church have always strived to attain the ideal goal of cooperation, united effort, and tolerance. We accept any person into full membership in our church on the basis of his membership in any other church. Denominational relationships are maintained, in that members may specify denominational goals for specific gifts.

On the moot question of baptism, I think our practice satisfies ninety-nine per cent of our people. We teach that "Baptism is an outward physical sign of an inward spiritual experience." If the sincere purpose to consecrate one's life is evident, the outward physical action of baptism is of secondary importance. The new member is then baptized according to his personal convictions, which are usually in accord with his family church background. We try very conscientiously to receive young people into the church in accordance with their family church backgrounds.

Thank God For Rain

Day upon day the skies were blue
Night followed night when stars shone, too.
'Twas wonderful, such weather fair,
'Til signs of drought came everywhere.

The ponds dried up, the streams grew small;
An air of death hung over all.
The corn stood shriveled in the field
And plants gave but a puny yield.

The lawns took on a brownish look,
So dry they crackled under foot.
Dust lay heavy on blade and leaf,
Many a well had come to grief.

Then, one day a wind was heard,
The branches of the trees were stirred.
Dark clouds, like angry mobs, were massed;
The lightning flashed, the thunder crashed.

Big luscious drops of rain came down
So fast one thought the earth would drown.
The storm was music in the ear;
One could almost stand and cheer.

The rain has come thrice more since then
And all the earth is green again.
Our thankful prayers ascend to God
For blessing us with rain drenched sod.

—*Kenneth M. Cooper*

Five Minnesota Workshops

• "We followed the Lincoln Convocation on the Church in Town and Country with five Town and Country Workshops in Minnesota," writes Albert Z. Mann, director of surveys and extension of the Methodist Church's "Minnesota Centennial."

"We had about 300 pastors and officially appointed laymen attending the workshops. There was little speechmaking, mostly discussion of vital problems and new programs.

"Several new projects for group ministry and other cooperative adventures in town and country work were considered."

Book Reviews

Agrarian Reform and Moral Responsibility. A Report of an International Conference on the Rural Church and Farm Land Tenure. Agricultural Missions, Inc., 156 Fifth Avenue, New York 10, N. Y. $1.00.

This report is edited by Marshall Harris and Joseph Ackerman. Dr. Harris also prepared for publication an "analytical summary" that adds to the value of the booklet. The Conference was held under the auspices of Agricultural Missions, the Rural Missions Cooperating Committee of the Foreign Missions Conference, the Farm Foundation and the Committee on Town and Country of the Home Missions Council, the Federal Council of Churches, and the International Council of Religious Education.

In the preface John H. Reisner generalizes "that the problems of land ownership, farm tenancy, and land use and occupancy are world wide; they are not peculiar to any geographic area." The problems are simply "more acute here or there and varying somewhat from one place to another as to characteristic and impact.

"Many of the problems grow out of pressure of population upon agricultural resources, concentration of ownership in a few hands, separation of ownership and operatorship, denial to disadvantaged classes of access to the land, insecure possession held by mortgaged owners, tenants and laborers, and high charges on the land of taxes and rents."

Dr. Harris in his summary states that the farm tenure situation affects the moral fibre and spiritual well-being of farm people. The participants in the conference felt that "the farmer should have secure rights in the land he farms and that it be free from the burdensome charges of taxes." The family farm appears to make possible "the broadest development of the stewardship idea as it relates both to physical resources and to human values."

There were no formal findings of the conference, but numerous participants made many recommendations to the churches. The church agencies should become centers of information. They should fearlessly advocate land reform. They should sponsor demonstrations. The churches should teach appreciation of rural life and the importance of conservation, by means of study groups. The work of agricultural missions throughout the world should be expanded. All missionaries should be aware of the agrarian situation. Church members should set examples of what is fair and just in the relations of debtor and creditor, of tenant and landlord.

Papers on the situation in the United States were presented by Messrs. Ackerman and Harris and by Henry S. Randolph. Dr. Randolph points to the many rural and social values of the family farm, says that the church has more than "a stake" in the family farm. He urges that the church should "be an evangel for family farms in every rural community throughout the nation."

—B. Y. L.

Sam Higginbottom, Farmer. An Autobiography. Charles Scribner's Sons, New York. $3.00.

The boy, Sam Higginbottom, was born in Manchester, England. He was destined to go West, to the U.S.A.; then again to the East, to India, where he was a pioneer agricultural missionary. In Manchester, Sam was first a butcher's boy, but at thirteen he started driving a cab. One of his passengers was the Prince who later became George V.

Sam Higginbottom was aided by Mount Hermon School. By sheer determination he secured further education at Amherst and Princeton, then went to India. His first and unexpected assignment was to teach economics, in which he had had one course in a Christian college. Soon he was to develop the Allahabad Agricultural Institute into a world-famous institution. There he taught young men to farm, and young women in the arts and sciences of homemaking.

"Our basic problem was the land itself." But the attitudes of men toward the land needed to be changed. Thus the agricultural missionary became an interpreter of the meaning of Christianity for rural life.

Sam Higginbottom became an adviser of governments. He went about among the people, always the Christian teacher interested in the improvement of agriculture. This autobiography is also the account of the life of a man of great faith and courage and practical works. It should be of help to all who teach agriculture under the auspices of our foreign mission boards.

—B. Y. L.

Employed Rural Officer Marries Employed Rural Officer

• For the first time in the history of the world, an employed rural officer has married an employed rural officer. The news is here reprinted from *Crossroads:*

"Crossroads learns the happy news of the marriage of Miss Elizabeth Rhea to the Rev. Clifford Samuelson in the chapel of the Cathedral at Eau Claire by Bishop Horstick. Our congratulations and best wishes to these two leaders in rural work. Mrs. Samuelson will continue in her post at '281' in the Division of Town and Country, and 'Cliff' will continue as head of the division, where he has been giving us such splendid leadership."

Congratulations and best wishes to these rural church officials of the Episcopal Church.

Prayer

• O God, who gavest us the Christ of the open fields, we thank Thee that the gospel of Christ is made warm and beautiful because Thy son Jesus was observant of the birds and the flowers and growing crops. Help us, like Him, to catch the message of Thy love to us as revealed in nature's handiwork. Help us, like Him, to interpret the common tasks and the simple duties of the country side in meanings that reveal the profound divinity of Thy Being. In Jesus' name, we pray. *Amen.*

—Ray F. Magnuson